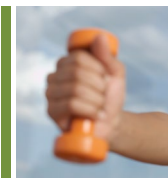
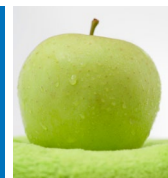


# TAKE CHARGE!



for health and living

May 2014

## Help for Low Back Pain



It's easy to hurt your back when you lift, reach or overdo activities, especially if your muscles are weak. Fortunately, we know a lot about relieving most back pain.

Typically, low back pain will ease up in a few days or weeks. Rest no more than 1 or 2 days and then stay moderately active. It's a myth that you need to rest for a long time (unless your health care provider tells you to because you have a serious condition, such as loss of bowel or bladder control or fever).

Use ice and non-prescription pain relievers to reduce inflammation. Treatment may involve easy stretching and strengthening exercises, or physical therapy.

These back-friendly habits can help reduce strain and everyday backache:

- Maintain good posture, especially while sitting. No slouching.
- Sit less. Get up and move about frequently.
- Do low-impact cardio exercise to improve circulation and strength.
- Use an exercise ball to help strengthen your core.
- Lose excess weight, especially abdominal fat.
- Let your strong leg muscles power the effort of lifting.



*See your provider if you have persistent back pain.  
Discuss lifestyle changes and exercise needs - and find relief.*

take charge



Get started now –  
during Women's Health  
Week, May 11 to 17.

## Women Staying Well

At every age, good health care is a woman's best friend. Review these smart strategies for taking charge of your health.

**Prevention is your primary goal.** We can often avoid the most serious health problems, including heart attack, diabetes, cancer and arthritis, by knowing their risk factors, signs and means of early detection.

**Worried about stress or weight gain?** Think about how these conditions might be affecting your health.

Awareness is the first step to change. ➡ Continued on page 4.

## city events

### Caring for Aging Loved Ones

Tuesday, May 6

12 noon - 1:00 pm Webinar

Login: See future flyer\*

### Wise Investing – Deferred Compensation

Thursday, May 15

12 noon – 12:45 pm SMT 4080

### Dealing With Burnout

Tuesday, May 20

12 noon - 1:00 pm Webinar

Login: See future flyer\*

### Blood Pressure Screening

Wednesday, May 28

Stop by between 10:30 & 1:30  
SMT 4096

### Women and Investing – Deferred Compensation

Wednesday, May 28

12 noon – 12:45 pm SMT 4020  
Registration: Call 447-1924

## Bike to Work Day

Friday, May 16

- Register for Bike to Work Month at [Cascade Bike Club](http://CascadeBikeClub.com)
- Pick up snacks, maps, a water bottle, and get a bike check along the way
- For more information on commuting to work by bike – go to your employee commute options website: [mytrips.seattle.gov](http://mytrips.seattle.gov)

\*Or, call Central Benefits  
at (206) 615-1340.

“An investment in knowledge  
always pays the best interest.”  
– Benjamin Franklin



Reach your personal best with Smart Moves at [www.personalbest.com/extras/May14tools](http://www.personalbest.com/extras/May14tools).



## Muscle Power for Every Body

**Muscles help us do almost everything – from protecting the joints and bones to helping us smile.** Everyone can benefit from added muscle power, regardless of age or fitness. Strength training options include: free weights, machine workouts, elastic bands, calisthenics and water-resistance exercise.

If you're overweight, older or don't like rigorous exercise, 2 to 3 brief workouts a week are a proven start toward better fitness. Muscle workouts can quickly build strength – and with it, the motivation to stay active.

**In addition to building muscle and reducing body fat, regular strength training can significantly improve:**

- ✓ Blood glucose
- ✓ Resting blood pressure
- ✓ Blood lipid profile
- ✓ Gastrointestinal function
- ✓ Bone mineral density

**And can help treat:**

- ✓ COPD function  
(chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- ✓ Low back pain
- ✓ Arthritis
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Metabolic syndrome (risk factors that raise risk for heart disease and other conditions)



Even if you have chronic health conditions, don't let muscle workouts intimidate you. Get your provider's help to create a routine based on your fitness level.

## Shape Up Your Blood Vessels

**Your heart pumps blood through a vast network of blood vessels called the circulatory system.** Arteries carry oxygen-rich blood from your heart and lungs to every cell in your body while the veins carry blood back to your heart. Capillaries, the smallest blood vessels, connect and support arteries and veins.

Over time, cholesterol and other fat deposits accumulate on artery walls, harden into plaque and narrow the arteries. Chronic high blood sugar also slowly damages blood vessels. Blocked arteries decrease the supply of blood and oxygen to your body, which can lead to high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke.

**To keep blood vessels strong:**

**Kick tobacco.** Because smoking injures the blood vessels, quitting is the best way to strengthen them. Within 1 year of quitting, your excess risk of heart disease drops 50%.

**Control diabetes.** Monitor your blood sugar level frequently. Heart and blood vessel problems are the main causes of sickness and death among people with diabetes.

**Check your vital signs.** Blood pressure and cholesterol levels are key indicators of blood vessel health.

**Add fruits and vegetables.** Their nutrients, including soluble fiber, are crucial to arterial health.

**Exercise daily.** Just 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity, such as walking, can produce blood flow and oxygen delivery that can significantly improve your arteries.



## Sunscreen 101

**Every time your skin tans or burns, it is damaged.**

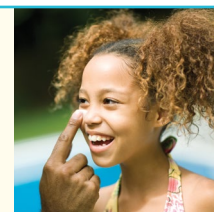
As the damage builds, you speed up the aging of your skin and increase your risk for skin cancer.

Using sunscreen is the best way to protect your skin from sun rays. When choosing a sunscreen, knowing some basics will help.

**Sunscreens contain filtering substances that reflect or absorb UV rays.** Sunscreens generally use both organic and inorganic ingredients for better blocking. Always use a broad-spectrum sunscreen. Broad spectrum blocks UVA and UVB rays.

**The FDA recommends using sunscreen with a minimum SPF of 15.** Dermatologists favor SPF 30 sunscreens, which provide slightly more protection. Regardless, always apply sunscreen thoroughly and frequently when you're in the sun, especially if you're swimming or sweating. Sunscreens can be labeled "water resistant" if their labels instruct users to reapply after 40 or 80 minutes of swimming or sweating, immediately after towel drying and at least every 2 hours.

**Using sunscreen can reduce your risk of melanoma skin cancer.** Only broad-spectrum sunscreens with an SPF of 15 or higher can claim to reduce skin cancer or prevent early skin damage.







## 9 Tips for Healthy Work-Life Balance

**Work-life balance is a challenge when you have so many demands on your time.** Use these tips to help you succeed at both work and your personal life.

- 1. Schedule “me” time.** Get together with friends, have a family outing or do things you enjoy such as a hobby or social club.
- 2. Beware of time wasters.** Disorganization and distractions such as using social media can lead to working longer hours to catch up. Learn to prioritize and manage time.
- 3. Lighten your load.** Enlist family members and friends to do errands or outsource them. Place online grocery orders, or hire a teenage neighbor to do chores.
- 4. Boost energy.** Exercising regularly, getting enough sleep and eating a balanced diet give you the stamina to fully enjoy life.
- 5. Unplug at home.** Turn off all devices and disconnect from work for a set period. During that time, focus on family or yourself, free of distractions.
- 6. Shift your focus.** Prioritize activities that make you feel happy and fulfilled, rather than ones you “have” to do.
- 7. Track your time.** Determine how you spend your time to identify and avoid duplicated effort or wasted hours.
- 8. Find more hours.** Get up 1 hour earlier to gain time before work, or turn off the television 2 nights per week to find free hours you’ve been lacking.
- 9. Spread it out.** Don’t save everything for your day off. Instead, strive for daily balance and take equal time to work and play.



## Get Ready for Summer Produce

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Use summertime’s plentiful vegetables and fruit as inspiration to add more color to your plate. Here’s how:

**Go green.** Include green vegetables daily for their stellar nutrient content. Stir-fry leafy greens – kale, spinach, arugula, collards, Swiss chard – in garlic and olive oil, or use them for salads.

**Throw in more colors.** Expand your taste buds with these fruits and vegetables:

- Apricots** – When fresh, these relatives to plums give a delicious tart-sweet bite.
- Heirloom tomatoes** – Succulent and juicy, these colorful red, green and yellow gems pair well with feta cheese and oregano. And they’re actually a fruit.
- Jicama** – Peel the brown skin, slice and eat alongside celery and cucumber with hummus.
- Peppers** – For a fast rainbow, toss together vitamin C-rich green, red, yellow and orange peppers with olive oil, lime and cilantro. Look for purple peppers, too.
- Berries** – Farmers markets have unique in-season berries to try. Look for black currants, bilberries, Cape gooseberries and mulberries in addition to traditional blueberries and strawberries.

*Fresh produce adds vibrancy, texture and flavor to your meals – plus lots of fiber and few calories.*



eating smart



### Produce Pick Fruit or vegetable?

Botanically speaking, a fruit develops from a flower and is the section of the plant that contains seeds. For example, tomatoes, peppers, peapods and cucumbers are fruits because they contain seeds, but are considered vegetables by popular culinary standards. The other edible plant parts are considered vegetables – stems, leaves and roots. One thing’s for sure: We should eat plenty of both.

### Strawberries in the Pink

### EASY | RECIPE

From Personal Best®

3 cups sliced fresh **strawberries**  
 ½ cup **nonfat sour cream**  
 ½ cup **low-fat cream cheese** (softened)  
 ½ tsp **vanilla extract**



1. Set aside 2 cups of berries.
2. Purée 1 cup of berries in a blender.
3. Add remaining ingredients and blend until very smooth; cover and refrigerate cream 2-3 hours.

**Before serving:** Combine remaining berries with cream and spoon into dessert cups.

#### Makes 4 servings. Per serving:

121 calories | 4g protein | 5g fat | 2.5 sat fat | 1.3 mono fat | .4 poly fat  
 | 16mg cholesterol | 16g carbohydrate | 7.9g sugar | 2.5g fiber | 149mg sodium

## Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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## News & Notes

■ **COMING SOON! Dependent Eligibility Verification Process:** If you cover dependents on City benefit plans, you'll need to provide documentation of their relationship to you in June and July. Later this month, watch for a letter from the City discussing this in more detail and introducing Aon Hewitt, the vendor handling this process.

■ **Finding the Right Primary Care Doctor for you:** It makes sense to [establish a relationship](#) with a primary care doctor before you need immediate medical treatment. Your primary care doctor is your health care partner for preventive care, medical treatment, and referrals to specialists, if needed. A primary care doctor can be a general or family practitioner (for all ages), a pediatrician (for infants, children and adolescents), or an internist (for adults).

Some of your best resources to find a primary care doctor are through your friends and co-workers. Another good way is through a high performing medical group or clinic. At [wacommunitycheckup.org](http://wacommunitycheckup.org), you can compare the performance of Puget Sound area medical groups and clinics to help you choose a primary care doctor.

### top safety

## Drowning: *What to Watch For*

If you're a boater, swimmer or anyone who spends time by the water, remember – **drowning is quiet**. The victim rarely splashes and screams for help.

Instead, former U.S. Coast Guard rescue swimmer Mario Vittone advises everyone to look for these signs:

- > Head is low in the water; mouth at water level.
- > Head is tilted back with mouth open.
- > Eyes are closed or appear glassy, empty and unable to focus.
- > Hair is over forehead or eyes.
- > Not using legs – remains upright in the water.
- > Hyperventilating or gasping.
- > Trying to swim in a particular direction but not making headway.
- > Trying to roll over on the back.
- > Appears to be climbing an invisible ladder.



**Supervise children at all times. Never leave them alone near water – not even for a minute.**

## Women Staying Well ➔ Continued from page 1.

**Stay informed.** It's clear we all need to know more about our health issues, including health care. Make time for self-care and routine checkups. Don't put off that Pap test or mammogram or forget your vaccinations.

**Start with simple changes and a fresh attitude.** Some great choices: Eat plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole-grain foods. Avoid sweets and alcohol. If you smoke,

set a quit date. Learn to enjoy and appreciate your workouts.

**Make smart choices.** Identify a few goals and how to realistically meet them. Example: Take a daily 20-minute walk in exchange for less social networking.

You can make the time if you can visualize a healthier future, feeling stronger, positive and more in charge of your life. **Start now.**

### expert advice

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAP

## Q: Accurate BP readings?

**A:** To have your blood pressure (BP) taken properly, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute provides these tips:

**Relax for 5:** Before your BP reading, sit quietly for 5 minutes with your back supported. Keep your feet flat on the ground and uncross your legs. Support your arm on a flat surface such as an armrest or table with your upper arm at heart level.

**Size matters:** Ask if the BP cuff is the right size (small, medium or large). The cuff's air bladder should encircle at least 80% of your arm. Muscular or overweight people may require a large adult cuff.

**Other tips:** Don't drink coffee or smoke 30 minutes before your test and make sure your bladder is empty. The average of 2 BP readings provides a more accurate result.

